

A 4-H Primary Mindfulness Curriculum

MINDFUL ME



PEER REVIEWED



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	TEEN TEACHER TRAINING	5
	I am 5! I am 8! The Role of Teen Teachers	
01	MINDFUL EATING	10
	Activity: Is This Apple Red?	
02	AFFIRMATIONS	12
	Activity: You Are Great!	
03	THE GIFT OF PRESENCE	14
	Activity: Giving Presence	
04	DESCRIBING FEELINGS	16
	Activity: Welcome Feelings	
05	MOOD MANAGEMENT	18
	Activity A: Smile Tag Activity B: Practice Focus	
06	QUIET LISTENING	22
	Activity A: Finding the Quiet Activity B: Creating the Quiet Activity C: Being the Quiet	
07	YOGA	28
	Activity: Balance, Flexibility and Strength	
	MATERIAL LIST	30
	RESOURCES	33
	REFERENCES	45



Teen Teacher Training

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

“The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.” Jon Kabat Zinn

Kung Fu Panda explains mindfulness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxUj2IANE8A>

MINDFULNESS IS:

1. **NOTICING/AWARENESS** – being aware of yourself and what is around you. Exploring the world with all your senses.
2. **OPENNESS/CURIOSITY** – being open to new experiences.
3. **NON-JUDGMENT** – experiencing life without thinking about it being good or bad.
4. **ACCEPTANCE** – being content with the present moment.

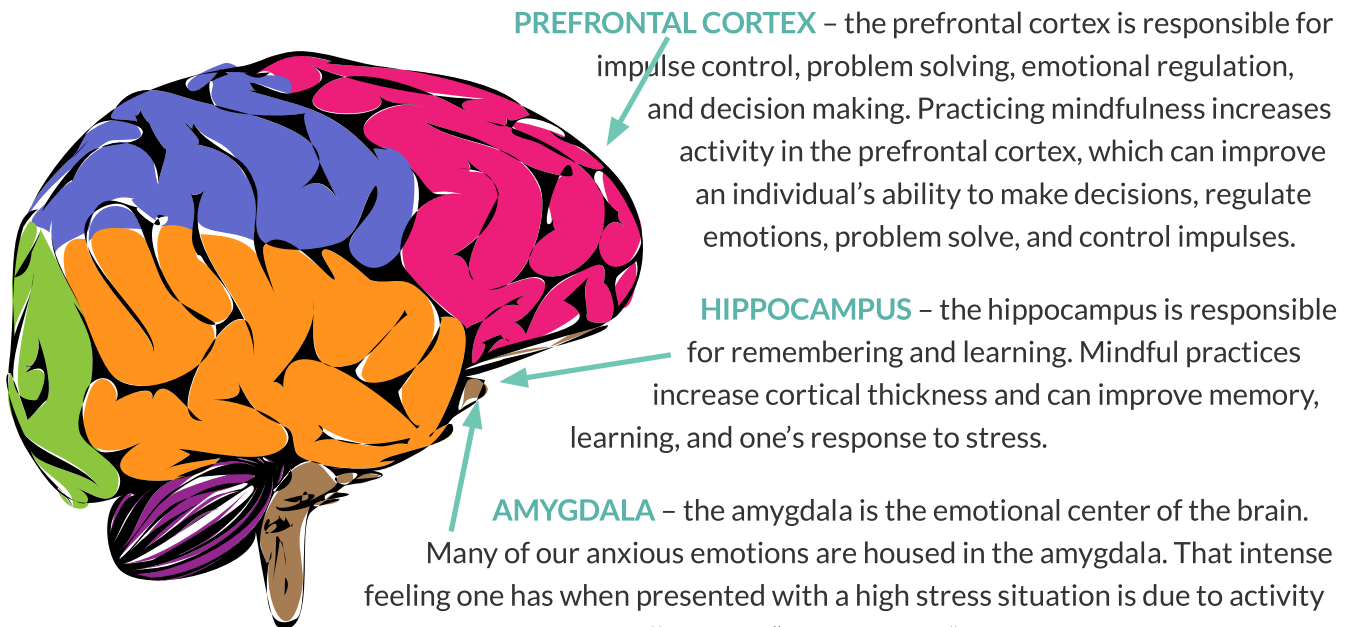
EXAMPLES OF MINDFUL PRACTICES:

- 📌 **BODY SCANS** – a body scan requires an individual to pay attention to each part of their body and how it feels. For young children you can walk them through the popular “head, shoulders, knees, and toes” rhyme. Ask youth to first focus on their head, how does it feel? Then, their shoulders, knees, and toes.
- 📌 **BREATHING EXERCISES** – monitoring breathing can be a way to focus and connect our mind and body. For young children you can ask them to imagine their lungs are a balloon. For each breath in they are blowing up their balloon and then releasing it with each breath out.
- 📌 **WALKING MEDITATION** – taking slow, thoughtful steps can be part of a walking meditation. These walks can also help connect the individual to natural environments.



WHY IS MINDFULNESS IMPORTANT?

NEUROSCIENCE AND MINDFULNESS – mindfulness practices have been shown to assist in brain function, particularly in three regions of the brain: prefrontal cortex; hippocampus; amygdala.



in
can help
the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala and therefore allowing for stronger connections to be made to strengthen concentration and focus. Mindfulness actually reduces the size of the amygdala which results in less reactivity to stress.

HOW CAN IT BENEFIT YOUNG CHILDREN?

Mindfulness practices help reduce stress and anxiety, and help give children tools to cope with the stress and anxiety they experience (Garey 2017; Taren et al. 2015).

Mindfulness practices help children feel more connected and express compassion and gratitude to others (Broderick and Frank 2014; Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor 2010).

Mindful children are better able to focus and concentrate, make decisions and therefore show improvements in academic performance (Kuo and Taylor 2004; Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, and Walach 2014).



I am 5! I am 8!

Remember when you were 5 years old? 8 years old? You likely remember being a little different than you are now. Understanding physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development in middle childhood can help in leading these mindfulness lessons. Youth aged 5-8 years old typically:

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Can run, skip, and gallop.
- Can write their name and some simple words.
- Like games with rules.

COGNITIVE

- Become logical in problem solving.
- Have the ability to focus attention.
- Can use memory strategies to solve problems.



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

- Begin to make social comparisons.
- Begin to recognize limitations in abilities.
- Can understand different perspectives and interpret the feelings of another.








MINDFUL EATING

ACTIVITY: Is This Apple Red?

Mindful eating is all about getting to know your food better – what it looks like, smells like, feels like, and – of course – what it taste like. By practicing mindful eating we slow down our food consumption, notice what we are eating more and how it makes us feel. As you read *No Ordinary Apple* youth will have an opportunity to practice mindful eating.

OBJECTIVES:

-  Identify ways to explore food.
-  Describe the importance of taking time to eat.
-  Identify ways family and friends help promote well-being.

MATERIALS:

- Marlowe, S. (2013). *No Ordinary Apple: A story about eating mindfully*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Apples

PREPARATION:

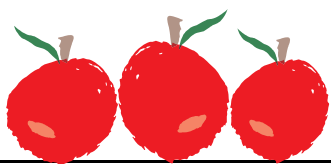
Preparation time: **40 minutes**

Activity time: **60 minutes**

Before you do this activity with a group of youth, read *No Ordinary Apple* a few times. Marking pages where you will request actions from youth is helpful. Each youth should receive a clean, whole apple.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Pass out an apple to everyone, but tell them not to touch it until prompted. This will be a very difficult task for many youth, but building patience helps improve mindfulness.
2. Begin reading *No Ordinary Apple*. As you read the story stop along the way to walk the youth through mindful eating. For example, on page 9 Carmen asks: “What color is the apple?” You will use this as a prompt to ask youth about the color of their apple. Pause your reading and provide them some time to examine their apple and report the color. Just as Elliot did, many youth will report just one color. Continue reading and then provide another pause for them to share the additional colors they notice.



3. On page 14, after Elliot has listened to his apple in the story, you will prompt the youth to listen to their apple and report what they hear.
4. On page 15, after Elliot has smelled his apple in the story, you will prompt the youth to smell their apple and report what they hear.
5. Continue reading through page 24 and then pause for the youth to taste their apples. Make sure you tell them to taste it slowly and not swallow right away. Ask them what they taste and how the apple feels in their mouth. Then, instruct them to swallow. Continue reading to the end of the story.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What did you notice about this apple? Did it taste different from any other apple you had before?
2. How can you make other foods taste special?
3. How can your friends and family help you be healthy? How can you help your friends and family be healthy?

APPLICATION:

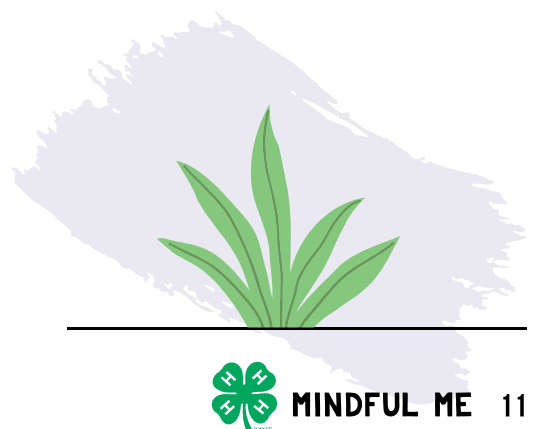
Ask each youth to choose a time when they will try eating mindfully again.

Provide each youth with the SEE Your Food placemat (page 33) to take home. Ask them to use the SEE Your Food placemat to practice eating one of their favorite foods mindfully.

ADAPTATIONS:

This activity can be done multiple times using different foods – consider using raisins, grapes, watermelon, or any other healthy snack.

For larger groups, or classroom settings you may want to pair students off and have them share their responses to the reflection questions with each other before sharing in the larger group. This practice is often called “think, pair, share.”







AFFIRMATIONS

ACTIVITY: You Are Great!

Practicing mindfulness includes how we choose to interact with others. Sometimes we choose to be mean and our actions hurt those around us. Sometimes we choose to be kind and our kind actions help those around us. It is important to understand that how we choose to treat people impacts us too. In this activity youth will practice being mindful of their actions towards others by creating an affirmation card or gratitude card. Affirmations are kind words that we say to someone, like “you are loved” or “you are funny.” Affirmations are meant to make people feel happy and good about themselves.

OBJECTIVES:

-  Describe positive ways to show care, consideration, and concern for others.
-  Describe what an affirmation is.
-  List healthy ways to express affection, love, friendship, and concern.
-  Make a plan to help family members at home.

MATERIALS:

- McCloud, C. (2006). *Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A guide to daily happiness for kids.* Northville, MI: Nelson Publishing & Marketing.
- Cardstock
- Scrapbooking paper
- Stamps
- Ink
- Envelopes (size A2 fits 4x6 cards)
- A variety of colored pens
- Double-sided tape
- Affirmations Cards (see Resource section)
- Poster paper, flip chart or butcher paper to capture youth responses

PREPARATION:

Preparation time: 40 minutes
Activity time: 60 minutes

Before you do this activity with a group of youth you will want to be sure to read *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* a few times. Pre-cut cardstock and printed paper to 4x6 cards. Gather supplies and set out for youth to use.

DIRECTIONS:

Always begin each lesson by welcoming the youth, thanking them for being there, and asking them what they remembered from the last lesson.

1. Begin reading *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*
2. Pause after reading page 9 and ask the youth “Think of a time when your bucket was full? How did you feel? Think of a time when your bucket was empty? How did you feel?” Allow youth to share responses only if comfortable. Continue reading.

3. Pause after reading page 13 and ask the youth “What is one way you can be a bucket filler?” Allow time for a response. Write these responses down on the poster/butcher paper for everyone to see. Continue to read the book to the end and lead a discussion with the reflection questions below.
4. After the discussion, invite youth to practice being a bucket filler, by creating an affirmation card for someone they know that is not currently present (i.e., not a classmate or friend that is also doing this activity). Provide the printed pre-made affirmation cards (page 35) to help youth get ideas.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

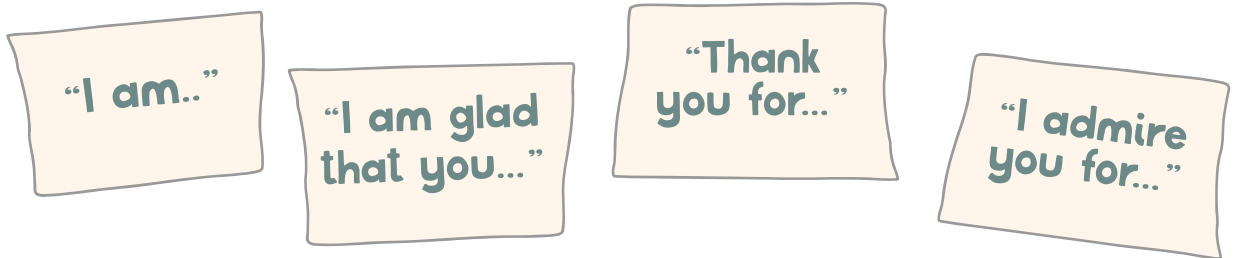
1. How do you feel when someone is nice to you?
2. How do you feel when someone thanks you for doing something?
3. Whose bucket did you fill today? Whose bucket will you fill tomorrow?

APPLICATION:

Ask each youth to send the affirmation card that they made to someone. Tell the youth that they can thank this person for something or just include a nice message. Cards can be hand delivered or mailed.

ADAPTATIONS:

If you are working with a younger group it might be helpful to provide phrases, a few choice sentence frames (these can be pre-written for younger youth still learning to write), or just do drawings for younger students. Suggested sentence frames:



You may also consider making affirmation magnets that can be given to parents or caregivers and placed on the refrigerator at home.

If working in a large group or in a classroom, consider placing a bucket or basket in the middle of the room and have youth practice “filling the bucket” with their affirmations.

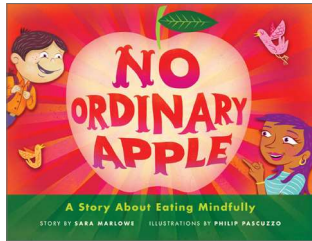


MATERIAL LIST

ACTIVITY: IS THIS APPLE RED?

Book: *No Ordinary Apple*

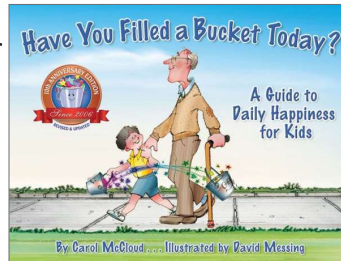
- Apples



ACTIVITY: YOU ARE GREAT!

Book: *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*

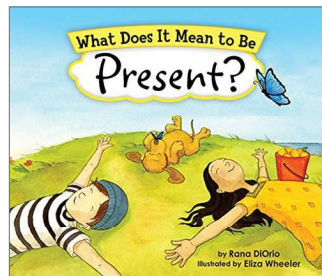
- Cardstock
- Scrapbooking paper
- Stamps
- Ink
- Envelopes
- Colored pens
- Double-sided tape
- Poster paper, flip chart paper, butcher paper



ACTIVITY: GIVING PRESENCE

Book: *What Does It Mean to Be Present?*

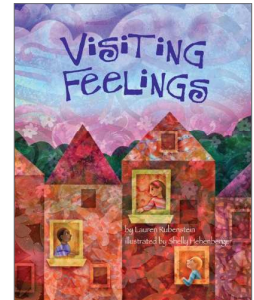
- Pens
- All other supplies for this activity not included because they can be found around the home, and can vary based on what they have available



ACTIVITY: WELCOME FEELINGS

Book: *Visiting Feelings*

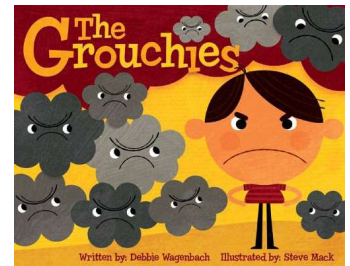
- Picture of the sun
- Picture of a rain drop or thunderstorm
- Stuffed grizzly bear
- Baby doll
- Rough stones
- Stuffed cat
- Stuffed mouse
- Paper
- Pens
- Magazines



ACTIVITY: SMILE TAG

Book: *The Grouchies*

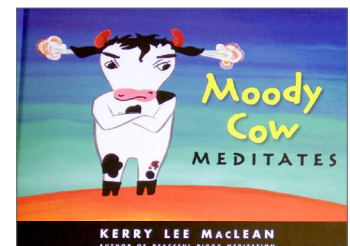
- Paper plates
- Popsicle sticks
- Tape



ACTIVITY: PRACTICE FOCUS

Book: *Moody Cow Meditates*

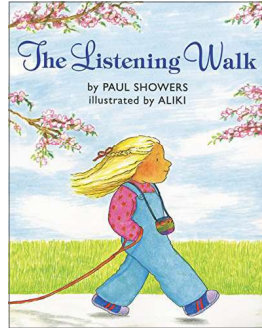
- Jars with lids
- Glitter
- Glycerin
- Liquid soap
- Eye droppers
- Glue



ACTIVITY: FINDING THE QUIET

Book: *The Listening Walk*

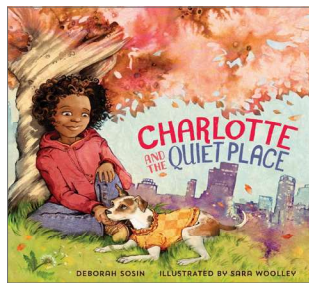
- All other supplies for this activity not included because they can be found around the home, and can vary based on what they have available



ACTIVITY B: CREATING THE QUIET

Book: *Charlotte and the Quiet Place*

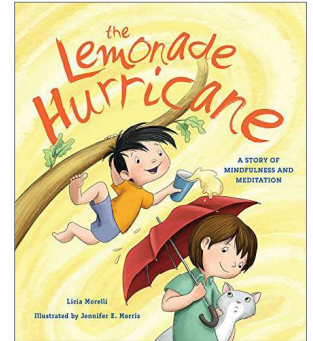
- Graph paper
- Pens
- Rulers
- Boxes
- Construction paper
- Paint and brushes
- Glue
- Scissors
- Modeling clay or paper mache
- Small objects such as: tree parts, rocks, fabric, sand, cotton balls



ACTIVITY C:

Book: *The Lemonade Hurricane*:

- Yoga mats, pillows, or some soft cushion to sit on
- (2) Picture words
- Envelopes for each person
- List of affirmations
- Paper
- Pens
- Miscellaneous materials: tape, straws, assorted wheels, rocks, paper clips, rubber bands, graph paper, fabric
- Jump rope
- Exercise balls
- Exercise mats



ACTIVITY: BALANCE, FLEXIBILITY, AND STRENGTH

I Am Yoga

- Yoga mats or a soft surface
- Blank index cards
- Crayons

